

2022

Workplace Characteristics That Affect the Career Development of African American Women

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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Walden University
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Abstract

Workplace Characteristics That Affect the Career Development of African American
Women

by

Coretta L. Alexander

MPPA, Walden University, 2007

BS, San Jose State University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

November 2022

Abstract

African American women are underrepresented in executive/senior-level positions in public and nonprofit organizations. The purpose of the study was to identify how workplace culture characteristics inform the career development of African American women. The conceptual framework incorporated Hegel's standpoint theory and Collins' Black feminist thought, emphasizing the importance of perspective differences stemming from social or professional experiences. The research questions addressed the workplace culture characteristics that assist or hinder African American women's career development in northern California. I transcribed, coded, and analyzed data gathered from 15 audio-recorded, semistructured interviews. Results indicated that specific characteristics of workplace cultures were identified as factors of success as defined. Admitting that they faced unusually stringent standards, the women in the study conveyed that being their authentic self, adding value, adaptability, and having supporters were the primary characteristics of the workplace culture that assisted them in their careers. This study's results could help fill a gap in understanding by focusing on the experiences of African American women and the factors that challenge them when seeking equal opportunities in the workplace with regard to obtaining senior-level positions.

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Acknowledgments

Giving honor to God for blessing me with the strength to transcend expectations and blessing all that is within my reach. Thank you to my chair and dissertation committee members, Dr. Ross Alexander and Dr. Robert Levasseur, for their phenomenal feedback and support during the dissertation process. I salute my dear friend and confidant, James Chilton, for his endless support and words of wisdom throughout my academic journey. Finally, I would like to thank my family (Fred, Eva, and Renalda Alexander) for their strength, encouragement, and support. I carry that with me every day. In the words of my father, Fred H. Alexander, “go get that lesson.”

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Employee diversity in nonprofit America has always been vital for the competition and survival of a philanthropic business (Capek & Mead, 2006). But studies have shown that organizational and cultural barriers hinder the advancement of women and minorities (Floyd et al., 2017), and many businesses and organizations are underutilizing the experiences and talents of women (Hoobler et al., 2011). With the increase of executive-level positions forecasted for the future, there is a projected shortage of skilled workers to fill these advanced careers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Although women and men experience many of the same barriers to success, women face stereotypes and environmental challenges that their male colleagues do not, including exclusion from informal networks, gender-based stereotypes, and a lack of role models (Catalyst, 2008). Though many women succeeded in gaining and obtaining meaningful jobs, little research addresses the factors that assist or hinder females in achieving significant roles (Sherrill, 2010).

Further, in 2011, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission found that 24,199 African Americans were executive senior-level officials and managers out of a total workforce of 48,653,932 in private industries. This number decreases even more when adding the demographics around African American women. Of the number of African Americans in these executive positions, women represented about 11,627 (the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2011). Although minorities have entered the workforce in record numbers, their attempts to reach advanced positions have been disappointing. Because of the disparity in numbers, there is now an emerging need

to understand the workplace culture characteristics that impact opportunities for African American women (White, 2009).

A modest body of literature exists regarding the barriers that hinder qualified candidates from fulfilling current and future leadership roles (Slay, 2009), which include race (Eagly & Carli, 2007), age (Bradley, 2007), and gender biases (Mills-Strachan et al., 2009) regarding women in leadership. However, there is limited research that identifies the workplace culture characteristics that assist the career development of African American women, such as networking opportunities (Gunn, 1999), gender diversity leadership policies (Gunn, 1999), and mentoring programs (Evans & Cokley, 2008). This research could fill a gap in understanding due to the focus on the positive and negative factors that influence African American women's advancement and success in northern California, providing an in-depth account of African Americans' experiences employed with nonprofit organizations.

Chapter 1 explores the challenges that many African American women identified in the existence of their professions and the techniques they utilized to prevail over such barriers. Chapter 1 includes the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, nature of the study, the definition of terms used within the review, assumptions, scope, limitations, delimitations, and the overall significance of the study. The chapter ends with a summary.

Background of the Study

This study aimed to identify how the workplace culture characteristics impact the career development of African American women employed with nonprofit companies in

northern California. The intent was to elaborate on the experiences, perceptions, and leadership qualities of African American women and the higher-level positions they have obtained or pursued. This problem is unique as it deals with an underrepresented area with a population that has increased over the last decade. Insights from this study should help African American women succeed in establishing the proper networks and strategies, thus supporting their eventual successful career path. Because a broad range of African American women is striving to eliminate the barriers behind the glass ceiling phenomena, supporting such individuals during the early stages allows for increased diversity in the workforce and developing more individuals eligible for key executive-level management and leadership positions.

Notwithstanding the number of years of exploration, questions of gender distinction in leadership and the influence of gender and managerial success in organizations are divided. One potential reason is that few studies on gender and leadership behaviors at the middle and upper management levels of management conducted (Eagly & Carli, 2007). However, the upward mobility of women and the phenomena identified as the glass ceiling continues to be a concern (Lyness & Thompson, 1997; Morrison et al., 2008; Swim et al., 2004).

Problem Statement

Recent studies show that the United States still has far to go to develop a workforce that reflects the country's changing demographics. Of the number of African Americans in executive-level positions, women represented about 17% (the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2011). Employee diversity in nonprofits has

always been a regular topic of interest in charitable businesses (Renz, 2010). Studies show that organizational and cultural barriers hinder women's advancement, particularly those of African American descent (Kim & O'Brien, 2018). There are few African American women in top leadership positions within nonprofit organizations (Carter-Sowell & Zimmerman, 2015). Though many women have been ultimately successful in gaining and obtaining meaningful jobs, little research on the factors that assist or guide females in achieving significant roles in the establishments exists.

Purpose of the Study

The primary focus of this qualitative research was to discover the organizational and personal influences, challenges, and barriers African American women encountered and conquered to progress in their careers (particularly within nonprofit organizations). Establishments restricting the official selections of minority women have begun to erode, giving more opportunities for minority women to experience a more extensive array of career opportunities (Sallop & Kirby, 2007). Though women have been more visible in executive and leadership occupations, organizational arrangements and gender stereotypes continue to hinder their career progress (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017). Similarly, women of color no longer have issues gaining entry to occupations at the entry level stages but at the advanced level (Giscombe & Mattis, 2002). All things being equal, qualified women and minorities should have priority if underrepresented in proportion to the available eligible workforce (Carter & Peters, 2016). However, studies have not addressed how ethnic diversities construct barriers that prevent minority women from excelling at the executive level. Therefore, this research study's purpose was to identify

factors that contributed to the career advancement of African American women. This study augments the current body of knowledge by distinguishing success factors or barriers experienced by each research participant.

Research Questions

Research questions in a qualitative study involve what a researcher is exploring regarding perspectives of participants (Agee, 2009). The items may also mention the participants and the site for the research (Creswell, 2007). The following questions assisted the study:

1. How do African American women perceive and describe their lived experience with the glass ceiling phenomenon within nonprofit organizations?
2. Are there any barriers that prevent African American women from promoting into upper management positions?
3. Why are some African American women able to overcome the obstacles or challenges associated with the “glass ceiling” and succeed?
4. How do African American women in leadership positions describe gender diversity leadership policies and programs at nonprofit organizations in northern California?

Conceptual Framework

This study’s theoretical framework was Hegel’s standpoint theory and Collins’ Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000). Standpoint theory articulates the importance of perspective differences stemming from social and professional experiences (Harding &

Nicholson, 1996, p. 302). This body of language is the interpretive framework for better understanding African American women's career journeys.

Applying the standpoint theory to African American women in this study, African American women described their experiences and the precautionary steps they took to succeed in their organizations for career advancement. Concerning Black feminist thought, Collins (2005) has put forth the idea of an African American woman's standpoint to identify epistemic resources in African American experiences that can be important to developing Black feminist thought. African American women may describe themselves as outsiders of an organization. The intersection of African American women's race and gender positions them outside the dominant culture or the privileged group. African American women must create an independent system to cope and rise above the overlapping systems of oppression to create success (Collins, 1986).

Within these frameworks, the study addressed how African American women described the workplace culture characteristics that have impacted their career development and provided an understanding of the diversity leadership policies and programs within their respective organizations. The study also contributed to social change by allowing African American women to overcome the barriers and increase their upper mobility in leadership positions.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative study involved in-depth interviews of study participants to explore African American women's experiences and challenges in reaching executive-level positions in nonprofit organizations. Using qualitative research allowed identifying

similar themes and categories in the purposely selected population. Qualitative interviewing projects are especially good at describing social and political processes—how and why things change (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This research study focused on 15 African American women leaders within nonprofit organizations to identify the factors and barriers they experienced as they advanced in their careers. Analysis of the data obtained from open-ended questions answered by the participants could help capture in-depth information needed to understand the various workplace characteristics within the project. These women's recorded experiences could also provide information for decision and policymakers in instituting diversity policies within their organizations, as phenomenological research supports the phenomenon through participants' individual experiences (Wertz, 2005).

Definitions

This section contains the definitions of terms used throughout the study that may give a shared understanding.

African American/Black: An American who has African and especially Black African ancestors (Davis, 1991).

Black feminist thought: Ideas produced by Black women that clarify the standpoint of and for Black women (Collins, 1986).

Career ladder: A structure that relates occupations in an organization or industry based upon skill progressions and increased earnings. (Browne & Giampetro-Meyer, 2003).

Diversity: Embracing the full spectrum of human and social identities, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, gender identity and expression, sexuality, ability, veteran status, class, and religion (Long, 2010).

Discrimination: The treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction in favor of or against, a person or thing based on the group, class, or category the person or thing perceives to belong to rather than individual attributes (Browne & Giampetro-Meyer, 2003).

Executive: A senior manager in an organization (Glass & Cook, 2016).

Gender: The range of characteristics and differing between masculinity and femininity (Wood & Eagly, 2015).

Glass ceiling: An intangible barrier within a hierarchy that prevents women or minorities from obtaining upper-level positions (Smith, 2012).

Leadership: A practical skill encompassing the ability of an individual to “lead” or guide other individuals, teams, or entire organizations; an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect the purposes mutually held by both leaders and collaborators (Glass & Cook, 2016).

Minority: Different racial and ethnic groups are unequal in power, resources, prestige, and presumed worth part of a population differing from others in some characteristics and often subjected to differential treatment (Long, 2010).

Nonprofit organization: An organization falls under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code (including most nonprofit hospitals, cultural organizations, traditional charities, foundations, schools, daycare centers, and foundations, among

others). The smaller related 501(c)4 category (civic leagues and social welfare organizations) deny tax-deductible contributions but may engage in some political or commercial activities that bar (c)3s; these do not include such mutual benefit associations as labor unions, workers, or consumers cooperatives, veterans' organizations, or political parties, which the law treats separately (DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990).

Objectification: The action of degrading someone to the status of a mere object, the expression of something abstract in a concrete form (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Occupational segregation: Women and some minorities pursue (or are forced) into certain kinds of jobs (Browne & Giampetro-Meyer, 2003).

Race: An assumption of shared genetic heritage among groups of a human based on physical characteristics (Johnson, 1990).

Self-definition: Challenging the political knowledge validation process that has resulted in externally defined, stereotypical images of African American womanhood (Collins, 1986).

Self-evaluation: Stresses the content of Black women's self-definition, namely replacing externally derived images with authentic Black images (Collins, 1986).

Sexism: Discriminatory practices directed toward women based on gender. These practices have a negative impact on the career advancement of women (Bell et al., 1994).

Stereotype: A probabilistic belief people use to antagonize people (Browne & Giampetro-Meyer, 2003).

White/Caucasian: White and Caucasian are interchangeable terms used to refer to individuals with European ancestry (Davis, 1991).

Assumptions

There were a few assumptions presumed for this study. The first was that African American women face several challenges in obtaining successful careers in nonprofits. The second assumption was that African American women who experienced the glass ceiling phenomenon were willing to share their experiences overcoming or being hindered by barriers. A third assumption was that participants would respond to interview inquiries objectively and forthrightly and that participants qualify to deliver individual and professional insight into their personal career development.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to research the experiences of African American women in seeking career advancement. This study had some limitations, including those due to the target population's nature (i.e., African American women; nonprofit sector; executive/management level). The specific location of the study also limited the study findings. This study involved analyzing qualitative data on the experiences of a purposeful sample of African American women employed with nonprofit organizations situated in northern California. The study's main population centers include:

- San Francisco Bay Area (anchored by the cities of San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland).
- Greater Sacramento (anchored by the state capitol, Sacramento).
- Metropolitan Fresno Area (anchored by the city of Fresno).

The researcher does have some control over the delimitation factors (Baron, 2008). The focus of the study was on individuals who are senior executives who work in nonprofit

organizations. The criteria for participants in the study were the following: (a) the women were in executive positions for nonprofit organizations in northern California, (b) the women were open to sharing perspectives regarding the research topic, and (c) they were willing to participate in the interview openly and honestly.

Limitations

This study's limitations were the generalization of findings, as the study did not include all nonprofit organizations, occupational titles, races, or sexes. Another limitation of the study was the small sample of 15 African American women who hold higher-level positions with nonprofit organizations in northern California. Bias from the researcher may be a limitation of the study because the researcher's sensitivity and integrity affect the findings of qualitative case studies. Case study methodology includes a thorough and active presentation of evidence to enable the researcher to reach an independent judgment. The bias was minimal because one of the qualitative approaches' greatest strengths is the richness and depth of exploration and descriptions obtained from the participants, not the researcher (Creswell, 2007).

Significance of the Study

Though the percentage of women in supervisory and management positions has increased over the last decade, the number of minority women, particularly African Americans, who hold top-executive positions is minimal (Trzcinski & Holst, 2012). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2015, women accounted for all workers employed in management, professional, and related occupations, somewhat more than their share of employment. Asian and Caucasian women were more likely to work in

higher-paying management, professional, and related occupations (50% and 44%, respectively) in 2015 than were Black (35%) and Hispanic (27%) women. Meanwhile, Hispanic (32 %) and Black (28%) women were more likely than Asian and White women (20% each) to work in lower-paying service occupations. The described inequitable numbers address the underrepresentation of minority women in executive-level positions.

Further, although 62% of nonprofit organizations' personnel are women (Gibelman, 2000), the glass ceiling effect distinctly recognizes a significant consideration of the scarcity of minority women in executive-level positions. As more practical investigations of corporate America records the glass ceiling for women, the glass ceiling results within the nonprofit sector are omitted (Gibelman, 2000). Extending research to take account of the nonprofit sector will not only heighten the validity and integrity of nonprofit sector research but for minority women throughout the extent of the industry. Much of the existing research does not contain an investigation of organizational and cultural barriers. Furthermore, most current investigations are overseen by Caucasian males who studied Caucasian females; however, they apply their rulings to all women (Richie et al., 1997). This form of oversimplification assumed that White women's experiences were similar to the experience of minority women (West & Fenstermaker, 2016). As a result, the career experiences of minority (African American, Hispanic, and Asian) women remain not well recognized.

Prejudices such as gender discrimination and organizational chains of command have placed a burden on minority women to conduct themselves, conferring on typical characteristics and, at the same time, anticipating them to perform corresponding to their

gender and minority role characteristics (Coursen, 1989). The application of different sets of principles for such situations continues to be a debated issue. But few studies have concentrated on gender and minority women, a dichotomy that diminishes admittance to leadership positions and uncertainty about their abilities to lead. This research study of how workplace culture characteristics impact the career development of African American women expands current studies and illustrates how progressively diverse places of work continue to battle discrimination in male-dominated cultures. For factors such as gender prejudices, managerial hierarchy configurations, and the shortage of the ability to encourage the sociological assessment of the workplace, being knowledgeable and overly capable does not guarantee that a woman would progress in their profession. Notwithstanding worthy purposes and the development of diversity training and initiatives, racial inequity is omnipresent. Consequently, progress has been gradual to take part in due to the barriers faced by minority women.

This study's motivating force was the contention that African American women must still overcome barriers to have career advancement opportunities the same as their counterparts, whether they are males of another ethnic group. This study entailed an investigation of the experiences of a sample of African American women employed by nonprofit organizations. More specifically, this study examined workplace culture characteristics that impact their career opportunities for upward mobility in challenging positions.

There are several studies on the importance of career advancement opportunities. Still, little research has focused on nonprofit organizations (particularly in the northern

California region) and the career issues that affect African American women. This study involved reviewing and assessing African American women's relative success and their problems when pursuing their career(s). The study's goal was to identify some of the best practices and successes that the candidates experience. Others in similar situations could be adapted to increase their opportunities for advancement into senior positions. Such contributing factors may include, but are not limited to, developing mentoring relationships, building professional networks, and discussing goals (with a supervisor or other counterparts). The study may result in social change by informing other nonprofit organizations of the benefits of implementing module-based instructions using early, intensive, and continual interventions to increase success and professional rates for African American women.

Summary and Transition

There has been a significant shift in today's workforce, with women accounting for almost half the work population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The increase of women in occupations is not a new phenomenon; however, there is still a limited number of women who have obtained higher levels of success in securing senior-level management positions. Because of the disparity in numbers, there is now an emerging need to understand the workplace culture characteristics that impact opportunities for African American women (White, 2009).

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the problem statement and rationalized the need to investigate further the challenges that African American women endure when pursuing their careers. Additional areas surveyed for this study included satisfaction,

motivation, and actions to improve and support the overall goals and objectives that can contribute to other opportunities. Though African American women have established a number of these attributes, this research study showed that the same factors primarily motivated the participants of this study.

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature that addresses the following: the glass ceiling phenomenon, minority male/female dynamics, gender discrimination, stereotypical roles, and assumptions. Chapter 3 of this dissertation contains details of the study methodology, including the overall research design and rationale, the researcher's role, population, sampling strategy, and data analysis process. The ethical and privacy considerations of the participant and the research data will also be in this chapter. Chapter 4 includes the participant demographics and characteristics relevant to the study and the data analysis results of the information collected. Chapter 5, the final chapter, compares the study results to previous research findings, discusses the implications of the findings, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Women represent more than half of the population in the United States, and 13% are African American (Guerra, 2013). Though some women have successfully advanced their careers, many women continue to fall behind men in top management positions (Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005). Despite the fact women have acquired opportunities in occupational professions in significant numbers and have accomplished equality with men within the entry and some mid-level management grades (Giscombe & Jones, 2004), their existence in upper levels of management is still inferior. Such reality is particularly among African American women, whose promotion into senior ranks at their place of business again transpires with remarkable infrequency (Catalyst, 2006). African American women are also underrepresented in executive or senior management positions in nonprofit organizations (Carter & Peters, 2016). Accordingly, I investigated African American women's experience about career success within nonprofit organizations, answering research questions related to how African American women within nonprofit organizations perceive and describe their experience with the glass ceiling, the barriers that prevent African American women from promoting, why some African American women overcome obstacles, and how African American women in leadership positions describe gender diversity leadership policies and programs in nonprofit organizations in northern California.

Chapter 2 discusses the current literature associated with the workplace culture characteristics that affect the career development of African American women. The literature indicates that an increasing number of charitable organizations are becoming

aware of thinking and working more strategically, including the advancement of diversity and expanded opportunities within their business lines. Barriers to African American women's career advancement become greatly unyielding as they make efforts to advance up the corporate ladder (Catalyst, 2004; Combs, 2003). These barriers, metaphorically termed the "glass ceiling," are described in this chapter to increase conceptual understanding of the narrative of African American women who can scale to higher positions within nonprofit organizations. I also provide essential definitions of the literature that explored the integrated outcome of race and gender in African American women's career experiences in nonprofit organizations.

Literature Search Strategy

The used several resources obtained through the Walden University Library search engines and interlibrary loans to search for literature. ProQuest, ERIC, and EBSCO were among the databases accessed in this literature research. The essential terms used in the literature search included *African American*, *Black feminist thought*, *standpoint theory*, *career ladder*, *diversity*, *discrimination*, *executive*, *gender*, *glass ceiling*, *leadership*, *minority*, *nonprofit organizations*, *objectification*, *race*, *self-definition*, *self-evaluation*, *stereotype*, and *career success*. The study included peer-reviewed articles, related articles/research documents, books, and doctoral dissertations. The literature review provided information about the understandings and experiences of African American, executive, and midlevel women in nonprofits. Little recent research about the specific skills within these organizations revealed a gap in the current literature.

Theoretical Foundation

Two theoretical frameworks influenced this research: standpoint theory and Black feminist thought. These two bodies of knowledge helped this study gain a better understanding of the African American women's relationships and political identity. Standpoint theory is a social theory arguing that group location in hierarchical power relations produces common challenges for individuals in those groups. Moreover, shared experiences can foster similar angles of vision leading to group knowledge or standpoint deemed essential for informed political action (Collins, 1986, p. S14).

There are numerous related and even perceptible feminist standpoint theories in existence. They center around one original conception: knowledge is socially located and arises in social positions structured by power relations (Hallstein, 1999). Building on the work of George Hegel, standpoint theory puts forward as a basis for an argument that epistemology depends on what is determined by the knower's social position, particularly by the power relationships that structure in their life (Harding, 1993). Standpoint theories identify that there are two justifications for an epistemology developed from an oppressed group, such as women, instead of those in dominant positions in society (McClish & Bacon, 2002). The first rationale claims that those disenfranchised must understand the perspective of those in power to survive. The second reason asserts that the epistemologies of marginalized groups are structured in a manner that enables them to maintain a more profound knowledge that explains the dominant group's perspective and critiques it. Such members of subjugated groups may have fuller insight into the social

order because they have no personal investment in maintaining, much less justifying that status quo.

In one of the fundamental beliefs associated with standpoint theory, Orbe (1998) emphasized that research must begin from an individual's concrete lived experiences and accentuate the need to be aware of a specific societal position. Orbe also asserted that research and knowledge production about women must begin from women's lives and that their vision is incorrect. Consequently, no one standpoint can represent all women's cognitive behavior, belief, or attitudes due to multiple differences among women (IvyPanda, 2018).

Black Feminist Thought

It can be challenging to discover and utilize theoretical constructs pertinent to elucidating and understanding African American women's experiences. Black feminists argue that an African American woman's perspective is grounded in their experiences (McClish & Bacon, 2002). Although some conventional philosophies deliver frameworks that are compliant enough to correspond to any assembly's development, Black feminist thought is more specific in its integration, validation, and centering on African American women's different realities, perceptions, and experiences (Collins, 1986; Hall et al., 2012).

Black feminism evolved during the second wave of the American women's movement in the late 1960s (Smith, 2005). In the 1960s and 1970s, the women's liberation and Black power movements endeavored to outline the characters and extend the opportunities of historically disadvantaged groups (Cole & Stewart, 1996). These

measures functioned to undertake these ends by characterizing the constituent groups' identities and political consciousness. In 1973, the National Black Feminist Organization was established (Smith, 2005). In 1974, an assembly of African American women known as the Combahee River Collective assembled in Boston, Massachusetts (Smith, 2005). The collective's name derived from a resistance action in South Carolina directed by Harriet Tubman. This unique military campaign, the only one in U.S. history, was conceived and run by a woman in which 750 enslaved people were set free. Representatives of these assemblies occupied characterizing and expounding the political identity of African American women and committing to the efforts against racial, sexual, and class oppression. The concentration on their abuse personifies identity politics, which defend the symbolization that the most reflective and fundamental politics curtail from one's identity as opposed to one that works toward ending someone's oppression (Smith, 2012).

Black feminists differentiate their exertion from that of Caucasian feminists, as the struggle of Black feminists is both anti-racist and anti-sexist (Smith, 2012). Caucasian feminists do not claim as a facet of their battle the element of race. Another dissimilarity is the feelings of solidarity the Black feminists have toward progressive African American men, which differ from the fractionalization that Caucasian women who are separatists have toward Caucasian men (Smith, 2012). To exhibit solidarity with African American men, the vision of Black feminism embraces the unified struggle to diminish the forces of racism, class separation, and sexism.

African American Women's Perception of Race, Class, and Gender

A Black feminist structure considers race, quality, and gender (Holvino, 2010). At the same time, this structure identifies the similarities and differences among African American women. Discrimination of racism, sexism, and in several instances, class inequality, remains omnipresent in many African American women's professional and personal lives. Black feminist thought is in the same foundation that African American women, as a group, share specific themes (Collins, 1986). The philosophy of Black feminist thought proclaims that the visibility of African American women asserts self-definition and self-determination as fundamental confronts the intertwining nature of oppression and postulates an image of African American women as powerful and independent subjects (Collins, 1999). A self-determined person is an individual who holds the capacity to assess their particular fate, just as a self-realized person can designate their reality (Collins, 2000). The research suggests that to promote and enable a personal or professional relationship with an African American woman, the stability of respect for, or minimum, a vigorous acknowledgment of these themes needs to occur.

The Social Interpretation of African American Womanhood

A classic within feminist theory, the "outsider within" syndrome is a common and significant consideration that unites the experience of African American women in the labor market. The outsider-within syndrome is a collective specification where African American women appear to have a place within a group not acknowledged as an equal (Collins, 2005). Before World War II, the two main areas of employment for African American women were as domestic and agricultural workers. As local employees,

African American women enacted responsibilities that permitted them to foster connections with Caucasian children and regularly with the employers themselves. Thus, women capture positions inside and outside the dominant culture (Hallstein, 1999). A woman's awareness of her organizational situation allows her to view her socially positioned knowledge, the dominant culture, and its feminine conception. Collins (1997) also described within her research the notion of "mammification," a governing image functional by those of the popular group that illustrates African American women as devoted and obedient servants. The contrast established itself when African American women were invited into accommodations where the dominant group had accumulated. Conversely, African American women remain as "unknowns" because they are indiscernible, and their voices silenced (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

African American executives are condemned if they do not appear sincere and supportive (Dumas, 1980). When an African American woman presents a behavior alleged as authoritative by those in her society, others facilitate that same behavior as a problem. Such a situation endorses and enables a higher, more critical conversation and a more prominent dialogue, and a more affluent degree of empathy among the groups. If African American women are self-defining and self-reliant, these internal circumstances will operate as characteristics in their career development.

The Characterizing Structures of Black Feminist Thought

The development of institutional racism is complex by racial segregation and coincidental discriminatory practices intended to confine African Americans to equitable treatment. The general purpose of Black feminist thought is to contend with the usual

manners and ideologies generated by oppression (Collins, 2000b). For African American women (Collins, 2000b), institutionalism, racism, sexism, and discrimination based on class continue to be discernable and observable. The often-encountered occurrences generated by these existing practices convey that African American women exist in a different world than those that are neither African American nor women (Collins, 2000). These stipulations intensify the warrant for a conceptual framework that differentiates Black feminist thought from other feminist schools of thought.

Though Black feminist thought may propose a simple rationale among African American women, these character traits are not necessarily exceptional and may share much with other bodies of knowledge (Collins, 2000b). These characterizable traits also do not suggest that African American women behave in identical etiquette (Collins, 1999). The variety among African American women develops distinguished encounters and, therefore, an assortment of reactions to these core themes. Innumerable elements (Collins, 2000), such as age, social class, sexual orientation, urbanization, and geographical location, symbolize African American women's elaborate diversity. Demonstrated in the following sections are the structures that characterize the epistemology of Black feminist thought.

Experience and Consciousness. The first structure acknowledges interdependence between an experience (Collins, 2000b) and mindfulness. The connection between what one does and not one rationalizes distinguishes the African American women's encounters as a collection. Collins (2000) proclaimed that the absence of political activism (achievement, conception, function) on behalf of an

oppressed group is perhaps the source of the group's defective consciousness (thoughts, ideas, cognition) of their subordination. There are two conceivable elucidations (Collins, 2000) of the oppressed groups' awareness if African Americans' common perception is not present. The first interpretation is that subordinate groups have a strong recognition of the power group and, therefore, lack sufficient clarification of their oppression. The second interpretation is that the oppressed group is "less human" than the controlling group. According to Collins, both arguments see the lack of activism by African American women or any oppressed group as a sign of the group's inferiority or a flawed consciousness of subordination.

The Legacy of the Struggle. The second structure is the connection between African American women's oppression and the battle's legacy. The legacy of the fight, according to Collins (2000), is about African American's efforts to endure in conflicting worlds: (a) that of the Caucasian privileged and oppressive and (b) that of the African American, exploited and simultaneously oppressed. Recognizing that this difficulty occurs does not validate that every African American woman identifies or encompasses its existence.

Dialogic Relationship. The third structure of Black feminist thought is a dialogic relationship that continuously characterizes African American women's experiences and group knowledge (Collins, 2000). This structure proposes that amendments of thought may go together with changes in action and manufacture altered experiences that promote changed individual or group consciousness. Within the perspective of this structure, Collins (2000) is acquainted with the conception of "rearticulation," which occurs when

African American women collect a unique view of themselves and the world. This rearticulated consciousness strives to empower African American women and promote resistance. Williams et al. (2005) identified the “use of dialogue” as a Black feminist thought theme. Finally, there is the proposition that oppressed groups use dialogues to authenticate empowered connections and associations.

Black Women Intellectuals. The fourth perceptible feature alleges African American women intellectuals (Collins, 2000) as the association of persons and the building group of Black feminist thought. Collins persists in indicating the importance of an African American woman’s intellectual ability to reside within and outside the professional arena. An African American woman’s proficiency bestows her to offer a conception of African American womanhood that is inaccessible to associates of different groups.

Collins (2000) proclaimed the fundamental accountability for explaining one’s actuality exists with the people who encounter that reality. The intellectual must advance and propel the matters of self-determination, self-definition, and group autonomy. The idea of self-determination and self-definition will suffice as variables of interest and inquiry for African American women’s active networks.

The descriptions “Black women intellectuals,” understanding, and realization correspond to the “lived experiences as a criterion of meaning” Black feminist thought theme of Williams et al. (2005). All three items or features (Collins, 2000; Williams et al., 2005) accentuates the importance of being aware of the conditions they have a value

of women knowing what they know through the circumstances they have to contend with during their career.

Significance of Change. The importance of change symbolizes the fifth distinguishing factor of Black feminist thought. Collins (2000) proclaimed the changing social conditions experienced by African American women produce a requisite for constant Black feminist analyses of mutual modifications that illustrate Black womanhood Collins used the belief of “mammification” as an instance. The author asserted that in today’s employment domain, a smaller number of African American women are domestic employees. However, Collins acquiesces this representation has undergone a modern transformation. African American women still embrace a dominating segment of contemporary emotional nurturing, lower-tier administrative, “maintenance after others” positions.

These five features conglomerate to produce prominence on African American women’s enablement and evolve the matter of diversity of all human existence (Collins, 2000). Black feminist thought entails examining social justice for one and all, not just for African American women. Black feminist thought theory affords the type of context encourages a profound understanding of African American women and their practice in a growing network.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Executive Roles in the Nonprofit Sector

In the nonprofit sector, organizational leadership focuses on the performance of the individual leaders regarding the overall organizational outcomes, whether positive or

negative. Those in an authoritative position are continuously attempting to meet regulatory challenges. Nonprofit organizations continually seek innovative, high-performance individuals with the skills and training to provide leadership amongst their staff and teams.

Organizational leadership is inherent in the very nature of the organization. It arises from the peculiar relationships among people joined together in a collaborative effort. It takes on an identity of its own, existing in these relationships rather than merely in the individuals who enter them. Thus, both influences as is influenced by those individuals. It communicates its organizational impressions and needs throughout the organization. (Stroup, 2004, p. 128).

A nonprofit organization's leadership generally refers to the ability to direct a group toward attaining goals (Riggio et al., 2008). Some use the term (leadership) to refer to a person who may hold a particular position or title. For this literature review and the surrounding framework around management and leadership within the nonprofit structure, leadership defines the ability to direct a group toward attaining goals.

Successful organizations can adjust to changes within their structure and focus on the strategic plans that allow an institution to move toward a mutually agreed mission as defined by all stakeholders. Leadership is an essential aspect of creating strategies and directing organizational culture to meet set goals and objectives successfully. For change to be effective, organizations must have a team where the staff and management have created a symbiotic and compatible relationship. It is incredibly critical for successful community nonprofit organization leaders skilled in several areas of operations and

management to facilitate the positive results desired. Facilitation will lead to continued and expanded access to these nonprofits' services.

Leadership

Leadership aptitude is a personality factor. The notion is that individuals are perhaps born as leaders, whereas others are not. Trait theory, developed under the guise of human personality and habitual behaviour patterns, leads to behavioral theory, which describes how exceptional leaders interact with subordinates and direct reports. Other leadership theories such as servant, stewardship, and charisma are critical factors that contribute to present-day theory and practice. Acknowledging these classical theories can help leaders understand which techniques will guide them to the most productive and active within their organizations. Directing people, teaching cohorts, and administrating organizations can enhance performance if the person in charge is attentive to the assortment of leadership and comprehend how to relate them in the appropriate work settings.

In the nonprofit arena, leadership skills are fundamental, as this business sector is responsible for inheriting deliverable programs and services that are becoming more difficult and competitive. The role of staff, particularly executive directors, must have strong skills in working with an often highly diverse collection of business colleges, each of whom is a crucial factor in the nonprofit's success. These skills in working with such a range of individuals and business colleagues are often not taught in management schools and, instead, must develop over time "on the job." According to Coursen et al. (1989), today's leaders sometimes appear to be an endangered species caught in the whirl of

events and circumstances beyond conscious control. Such low existence is due to the members with which management must coexist and the environment or organizational culture in which participants are.

Nonprofit management and leadership, particularly organizations that engage in human services, must have strong knowledge of the service delivery environment. It is one of the crucial variables that helps factor in mission success. The interaction between the leader and the organizational culture may have monumental effects on the organization's success or lack of success as it strives to attain its goals and mission.

The Glass Ceiling Phenomenon

The glass ceiling is an unacknowledged, self-imposed barrier to workplace advancement, usually regarding women or minority groups. An article in The Wall Street Journal cited the term "glass ceiling" in the mid-1980s. The phrase described the invisible barriers that blocked most women from achieving positions, regardless of their education, experiences, or skills (Johnson, 1990). The glass ceiling is a metaphor for the prejudice and discrimination faced by women as they try to seek career development (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

The following section concentrates on the glass ceiling as an experience to supply conviction to the understanding of the successes of African American females who have obtained higher positions. In addition to sustaining themselves in the careers, a rare phenomenon warrants additional and increasing research.

Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 created the 21-member, bipartisan Federal Glass Ceiling Commission. The Commission's mandate is to study the barriers to the

advancement of minorities and women within corporate hierarchies (the problem known as the glass ceiling), issue a report on its findings and conclusions, and make recommendations on how to dismantle the glass ceiling. (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

The Commission conducted extensive research and information-gathering effort, including public hearings, surveys, and interviews. The research findings, along with the Commission's report in 1995, "Good For Business: Making Full Use of the Nation's Human Capital," concluded that glass ceiling barriers deny untold qualified people the opportunity to compete for and hold executive-level positions in the private sector. The Commission declared in a summary of recommendations that include:

- Demonstrating CEO commitment
- Including diversity in all strategic business plans and holding line managers accountable for progress
- Using affirmative action as a tool
- Selecting, promoting and retaining qualified individuals
- Preparing minorities and women for senior positions
- Educating the corporate ranks
- Initiating work/life and family-friendly policies
- Adopting high-performance workplace practices
- Leading by example
- Strengthening enforcement of anti-discrimination laws
- Improving data collection

- Increasing disclosure of diversity data

These recommendations help address the factor that overcoming the glass ceiling phenomenon was an economic imperative for America. The Commission directs the following with regards to demonstrating CEO commitment: Eliminating the glass ceiling requires that the CEO communicate visibly and continue commitment to workforce diversity throughout the organization. The Commission recommends that all CEOs and boards of directors set company-wide policies that actively promote diversity programs and policies that remove artificial barriers. (Glass & Cook, 2016).

An additional example regarding how the glass ceiling has demonstrated an unfortunate and enduring situation, Catalyst (2006) assessed that approximately 0.9% of corporate officers are African American women. In their report, “Connections that Count: The Informal Networks of Women of Color in the United States ,” the explanation for this low number is about the factors that redeemed critical to their success in corporations. Forming relationships with influential colleagues appears to be the most challenging and complex task for African American women seeking mobility. The report explains this challenge to establishing mentoring relationships and notes that African American women and Caucasian males in positions to help advance African American women’s careers were reluctant to develop those relationships with Caucasian men because of the concern with negative racial stereotyping. This links to the historical elements of slavery: legally enforced segregation and low-class status relative to whites and other immigrant groups (Jones, 1986). In another report prided by Catalyst (2004), “Advancing African-American Women in the Workplace: What Managers Need to

Know,” Caucasian men are uncomfortable forming these relationships for similar reasons.

Equal Employment Opportunity

In the United States, the prohibition of employment discrimination established Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This act prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. African American women experience more difficulty reaching senior leadership positions than their Caucasian counterparts (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). Three specific research questions were the focus of Wyatt and Silvester’s study:

1. How do senior managers explain their leadership journeys?
2. What are the barriers they have to navigate?
3. In what ways are these similar to or different from those experienced by white senior managers?

Wyatt and Silvester collected data from 20 professional African American women and 20 Caucasian American women responsible for staff in different organizational functions (i.e., human services, communications and informational technology, policy development, and operations). Based on the data, the authors identified more career experiences that they described as significant progression, including networking, professional development, and performance evaluation. Alfred (2001) examined African American women’s professional development history to explore how minority professionals develop competencies to meet career expectations. Alfred studied how minority professionals developed skills to meet in predominately Caucasian cultures. The

findings indicate that race, culture, and identity play a vital role in the career development of minority professionals in majority organizations.

Managerial African American women face barriers to advancement in numerous ways. African American women experience lower promotion rates than Caucasian women managers, occupational segregation, pressures to modify sex and professional roles, different predictors for advancement between African American women and men, new mandates to the necessity to work versus options for Caucasian women and negative career outcome expectancies resulting from racism and sexism (Combs, 2003).

Overcoming Adversity/Minority Women in Nonprofit Organizations

Despite the proportion of women in management has increased steadily during the past decades, absent is a shortage of literature that distinguishes the differences between genders within nonprofit organizations. Although one can assume the work values within nonprofit organizations promote gender equality in promotion decisions, there is preliminary evidence that women are underrepresented in higher management positions in the nonprofit sector. Whereas the mechanisms resulting in the under-representation of women in management are studied extensively in for-profit organizations, little is determined about these mechanisms in nonprofit organizations. (Damman et al., 2014). Is gender in nonprofit organizations—even given the underlying values of these organizations—an impediment to attaining a management position. With the nonprofit sector excluded from research investigations, this study sought to clarify discrepancies that were apparent under the umbrella of the nonprofit sector.

The nonprofit sector is a vast and diverse assortment of organizations (Salamon, 2004). It includes most of the nation's premier hospitals and universities, almost all of its orchestras and opera companies, a significant share of its theaters, all of its religious organizations, the bulk of environmental advocacy and civil rights organizations, and vast numbers of its family service, children's service, neighborhood development, anti-poverty, and health facilities. It also includes the numerous support organizations, such as foundations and community chests, that help generate financial assistance for these organizations, and the traditions of giving, volunteering, and service they help foster (Salamon, 2004). Over 1.4 million nonprofit organizations operate in the United States and are recognized by the Internal Revenue Service; however, there are some exceptions concerning filing an annual return. Most small tax-exempt organizations with gross receipts around \$50,000 or less must submit the IRS form 990-N, known as the "e-postcard." This research study focused on nonprofits that earned more than \$50,000 in Northern California.

Historically, the nonprofit sector has been dominated by women. According to the Glass Ceiling Commission, most female and minority professionals and managers did not work in the private or for-profit sector. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women comprise 76.5% of those employed by hospitals and 79.0% in other nonprofit areas. The female domination of human services crosses various specializations, from nursing and social work to teaching. Research studies contended that more women are within the nonprofit sector because of their perceived stereotypical communal characteristics or the ability to be more empathetic, emotional, sensitive, responsive, and

considerate (Chima, 1999; Guy & Newman, 2004; Hau Siu Chow & Crawford, 2004;). According to Preston (1990), more women may actively seek nonprofit employment because such organizations provide women with more opportunities that meet their experience and work credentials. The author further indicated that women with more education and experience might find working in this sector more attractive. Other authors dispute that those with a more definite preference for helping are more likely to work in nonprofit and public areas. That may be a more reliable link between women's helping and nonprofit employment than men's (Lee, 2014).

Like the nonprofit sector, the significant barriers to upward career mobility are no longer at the employment process's recruitment and job entry stages but the advancement stages (Giscombe & Mattis, 2002). African American Women are working to attain top-level positions, but barriers still exist, evidenced by the small number of minorities (particularly African American Women). Studies show the percentage of people of color in the executive director/CEO role has remained under 20% for the last 15 years, even as the country becomes more diverse. Knowing such operational challenges are in existence assists in explaining why African American women remain at the managerial level or lower.

Leader–Member Relations

Leader-member relations help determine the measure in which the employees accept the leader. Leaders will have more power and influence if they have a good relationship with members than if they do not if they can be liked, respected, and trusted

(Fielder, 1967). Concerning the relationship between leaders and followers, leaders are more likely to support others if they can be liked and respected.

Defined as an “underlying need structure of the individual, which motivates his behavior in various leadership situations, such styles are seen as constant” (Fielder, 1967). Leadership style is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. In the workforce, it is a form of cross-cultural behavioral consistency. It submits how a person in charge networks or interrelates with their subordinates. In particular, the dimensions of leadership style represent the way a leader (1) makes an effort to influence the actions of the staff, (2) formulate resolutions regarding the course of the department, and (3) establishes a sense of equilibrium linking goals and adjustment directives of the group. According to Fielder, leadership style depends on their personality and is, thus, fixed. This fundamental thought also claims that there is no one best way for a leader to manage an organization. The supervisor needs to be insightful regarding the situational context within the organization.

Gender Discrimination

The prohibition of employment discrimination established Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act in the United States. This act prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national (Alonso et al., 2017). The Civil Rights Act and successive formation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) provided legal protection to those individuals experiencing discrimination on their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The federal government mandated affirmative action programs, yet discrimination still exists today (Harrison et al., (2006). The federal

government continued to explore women's issues by creating the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission.

The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, a 21-member bipartisan body appointed by President Bush and Congressional leaders and chaired by the Secretary of Labor (Elisabeth Dole), was created by the Civil Rights Act of 1991. Its' mandate was to identify the glass ceiling barriers that have blocked the advancement of minorities and women and the successful practices and policies that have led to the improvement of minority men and women in decision-making positions in the private sector. The Commission conducted extensive surveys of corporate ladders, women, and minorities and found that barriers include societal, internal, structural, and governmental (Glass & Cook, 2016). The Commission surmised that the shattering of the glass ceiling would make businesses more productive and resilient and "serve our national values" (Glass & Cook, 2016). In 1996, the Commission dismantled because some leaders felt it had completed its mandate (Kephart & Schumacher, 2005).

Barriers and Career Development Issues

The scarcity of women in leadership positions is not new. However, today, African American women's representation at senior levels in organizations is far from where it needs to be. Given the higher number of females obtaining degrees, representing a majority of graduates worldwide, they still represent a small percentage of executives within nonprofit organizations (Heller & Stepp, 2011). Many African American women who now try to shatter the "glass ceiling" recognize promotions as their primary avenue

of career mobility. Many managerial vacancies are filled within and across organizations, often as official regulatory policy (Durr & Wingfield, 2011).

It is pivotal to identify executives who will produce a route for our future leaders and senior managers who strive continuously to better the bottom line. Despite the fact some are already breaking barriers referred to as “concrete” (as opposed to “glass”) at some of the largest firms, many more advancements continue. Although there has been much progress, the testimonies of African American executives in recent employment discrimination cases suggest many continue to find barriers to advancement in the workplace (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2017).

Stereotypical Roles and Assumptions

Over time, several authors have alluded to factors that explain why women have not gained equal access to executive-level promotions. As early as 1990, Catalyst, a research organization committed to the advancement of women’s careers, found many barriers to the upward mobility of women, including suitability for careers in business, management aversion to taking risks with women in areas of more responsibilities, lack of careful career planning and planned job assignments, exclusion from the information network of communications, and counterproductive behavior of male colleagues (Bell et al., 1994). In an examination conducted by Catalyst, the organization described the lack of general management or line experience as the most significant barrier identified by women and chief executive officers (CEOs). Other restrictions include stereotypes about women’s roles and abilities, exclusion from informal networks, and top leaders’ failure to assume accountability for women’s

advancement (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). Additional studies completed in 2009 identified the significant barriers for women, including “gender-based stereotyping,” exclusion from informal networks, and lack of role models (Prime et al., 2009). From the decade of research by Catalyst, common themes relating to the barriers to women’s upward mobility have emerged.

In 1995, the predicament of women in association with career progression acquired national attention, which developed the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission. The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission distinguished several barriers in researching minority women and career escalation and promotions. Identified barriers included areas such as educational attainment, lack of excellent career opportunities, and discrimination. The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission recounted a deficiency of recruitment and outreach, business office environments that alienated women and minorities, and ‘pipeline’ barriers that affect advancement opportunities as internal structural barriers.

Assembled in a workforce that did not have a transparent advancement circuit, women and minorities did not experience any mentoring or opportunities for management training or networking. Upper management did not bestow women the chance to acquire all-important duties that would progress their abilities and skills. The final obstacle recognized by the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission was governmental barriers. Lack of data collection and reporting and inconsistent government monitoring added to the glass ceiling boundaries for women and minorities (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

Workplace Exclusion

Workplace exclusion occurs when dominant groups—often Caucasian or men—do not accept those from “outsider” groups. This exclusion is from negative stereotyping of outsiders and strong bonds within the inner circles (Catalyst, 2006). Also, an organization’s informal norms, often set and maintained by Caucasian men who have been in the organization for an extended period and hold positions of power, can reinforce outside groups’ exclusion. Not surprisingly, African American women are more likely to experience high exclusivity and fewer Caucasians in their networks. Such situations are possible as it is hard for women of color (African American) to form relationships with the dominant group when they do not feel accepted. It is crucial to remember that the higher the perception of exclusivity, the greater the need for managers to institute inclusive measures.

Summary

The area dealing with people and performance highlights how people make all the difference in how an organization performs. The various articles researched illustrated the dramatic effects of paying attention to an organization’s most valuable resource, its’ people. The findings present show how people rewarded can directly affect their performance. Organizations that enlist the best results from their workforce show to use intrinsic motivators and achieve an internal commitment to their vision and mission. Some were much more successful at this than others.

Organizational culture, its components, and its potential impact on organizational performance was an additional area explored in this review. Research in nonprofit,

human service organizations, and higher education settings for understanding corporate culture explored. It discussed how perceptions, values, and beliefs could differ among organizations, impacting their performance and job satisfaction. Jaskyte and Dressler's study of an organization's culture perpetuates itself and its effect on people's reactions. Noting that every organization has a culture, organizational culture attributes are listed and defined, illustrating where differences among the organization's cultures can arise and how they motivate people to perform differently.

The role of the leaders was in this literature review. Articles by Kim (Participative Management and Job Satisfaction: Lessons for Management Leadership) and Stanley et al. (Employee cynicism and resistance to organizational change) brought to light how much the leader's authority has over the job fulfillment inspiration and the workforce's definitive presentation. The review also includes attributes of corporate entrepreneurship, their importance to a successful organization, and dramatic change for the organization's good. A model of leadership's influence over work-unit satisfaction was present and its effect on performance. Again, leadership success variables, evolving around motivation and culture, are introduced, noting that these seem to drive significant differences in how organizations respond to their internal and external environments.

Overall, the research reinforces that leadership, culture, job satisfaction, and motivation profoundly impact how the people within an organization respond to their environment. The research of such authors Eddy and Lewis can drive one to conclude that how the leadership of any organization treats its personnel will directly affect the organization's output. Management gurus such as Eyal and Kark (2004) refer to hundreds

of documented cases and companies successfully and unsuccessfully implementing change. The cases told stories of achievements mainly through attention to people. Motivation theory research provides insight on how organizations can understand and deal with people as individuals while enabling action taken on a higher level, aligned with the influential groups found within every organization.

Chapter 2 administered an analysis of the current literature associated with this academic work. The research assigned the implications to the purpose statement of this study, which was to examine the career success of African American females employed in Northern California. The following chapter (Research Methods) explains the procedures utilized. The areas covered are (1) Introduction, (2) Participants and Sample, (3) Researcher's Role, (4) Data Collection Procedures and Recording Tools, (5) Data Analysis and Interpretation, (6) Threats to Quality, (7) Validity, and (8) Ethical Issues.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This qualitative study aimed to explore the experiences of African American women and the lack of diversity and equal opportunities in the workplace that prohibits them from advancing to executive positions in their careers. The purpose was to answer research questions related to how African American women in nonprofit organizations perceive and describe their experience with the glass ceiling, barriers from promoting them to upper management positions, why some women are able to overcome the glass ceiling, and the role of gender diversity leadership policies and programs in nonprofit organizations in northern California. The implications for social change include the potential to influence organizational leaders to review the culture and diversity in the workplace, provide mentorship programs, and evaluate who may advance to senior management positions. This chapter describes the qualitative research methods utilized in this study, including the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, participant population, setting, and data collection, analysis, and interpretation plans.

Research Design and Rationale

The real-life experiences of 15 African American women were examined by utilizing a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a process of a naturalistic inquiry that seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, and the study of research problems that inquire into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research utilizes analogous investigations (Gutmann, 2014; Janesick, 2001; Rossman & Rallis, 2016) and has applied

procedures such as interviews, surveys, audio and video documentation, cinema, and photography (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Moreover, qualitative research describes nonstatistical inquiry techniques and processes used to gather data about social phenomena (McNabb, 2017). A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds (Merriam, 2002). Using a qualitative methodology is helpful when a small amount of information exists about the phenomenon researched (Merriam, 2002; Richie et al., 1997). Qualitative research is an instrument people bestow to understand their domain and the situations around them by identifying certain conditions of lived experiences, making it applicable to the current study.

Researcher's Role

I identified a need to investigate the experiences of minority females (particularly African American women) in the nonprofit arena and record the challenges and triumphs of their executive-level positions in the industry. My role as the researcher was to make the initial contact with the participants, conduct and transcribe the interviews for data construction, and summarize the context of this research study. The methods were contingent on my ability to process information, respond sensitively to social cues, and adjust the research design as new data questions emerge for interpretation. My subjectivity as the researcher was a resource to leverage rather than a source of unwanted bias and invalidity.

Methodology

I used the evaluation method to analyze the experiences endured by African American women in their current occupations and workplace to conclude the challenges they face regarding upper management mobilities and achievements. Program evaluation with a typological approach, specifically an evaluation that surrounds the effectiveness of a program, was performed with each participant involved in the study. I utilized a detailed questionnaire for surveying the entire population of participants employed within the specified regions studied. Personal interviews were conducted with respondents to understand the behavioral changes and results seen after being in their work environment personally and professionally. As such, the methodology used in evaluating the effectiveness of this research included a comparison of specific operational indicators (performance metrics) to establish performance criteria. Detailed performance metrics defined measure indicators of program effectiveness. I utilized empirical evidence in metrics data collected from the interviews and other internal data sources to perform the analysis. A statistical analysis of the data determined the data trends, the variability of program data, and the relationship of these data to specific variables.

Participant Population, Size, and Setting

The participants for this study were a collaborative group of African American women holding senior executive positions in northern California with various nonprofit organizations. Fifteen African American women, once identified, participated in the study. For the study's scope and nature, the candidates defined were women who work in professions that include but are not limited to occupations within medical and nonmedical

operations, marketing firms, the telecommunications industry, community-based organizations, and academia. The participants were a collective group of African American women within my social and professional networks in addition to referrals by the participants. The participants answered a series of questions that gathered their viewpoints on the industry, their paths to success, and their struggles to reach their senior executive positions. Participants offered their experiences and the strategies they implement to obtain senior-level management positions as well as obstacles they faced. The personal interviews conducted will assist in understanding the perceptible change in knowledge and attitudes attributed to the candidates who might face barriers within their career development endeavors. For anonymity, the candidates that participated in this study were P1-P15.

Data Collection and Recording Tools

The interviews involved semistructured audio-recorded questions and transcriptions using Zoom Meetings (<https://www.zoom.us/>). Semistructured interviews are beneficial when one has an opportunity to interview participants (Bernard, 2012). The pre-established questions contained guidelines that enhanced communication during the meeting. The answers to the questions were the opinions of the participants based on their experiences. Part of my data collection methods included verbatim transcriptions and written interpretations, in which they incorporated the proactive measure of member checking. I used the NVivo Statistics software produced by QSR International to analyze the data.

Data Collection Procedures

Fifteen African American Women contributed to individual, face-to-face or telephone interviews based on availability and obtainability. The discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed. Semistructured interviews proceeded with a script; however, they continued as open-ended for the participants to respond to the subject matter unconfined (Bernard, 2012). Throughout the meeting, I operated an Otter.ai device to confirm that the written sessions were precise and ensure transcription accuracy.

The information was indexed and cataloged to route the data from interviews with 15 African American women participants. With textual data, indexing involved reading each phrase, sentence, and paragraph in fine detail and deciding “what is this about” to determine which part or parts of the index apply (Gutmann, 2014). This methodological approach for examining contextual data permitted me to follow the data before analysis. I indexed transcribed data from the interviews to identify themes and sorted similar content gathered from each meeting.

Tracking the data from interviews with 15 African American women was coded per the QSR systematic process of analyzing textual data, allowing me to keep track of the information before data analysis. A code is a word or short phrase that captures the essence of the data received during the interview process (Salamon, 2004). Coding has two phases; the first phase is sharp and precise, and the second phase is more detailed and elaborate (Green & Ledgard, 2011). Coding is a system of making data transparent and concise in vertical alignment (Green & Ledgard, 2011). Once data were processed and

analyzed, I created themes from the outcome of the coding process. I used both phases in the coding process to create topics based on the data.

Data Analysis and Interpretation Plans

NVivo 12 is the system I utilized to help me organize and analyze the data. I generated categories centered around the information acquired during the interviews with 15 African American women during the indexing process. Performing research analysis on African American women in senior executive positions for nonprofit organizations contributed to understanding how African American women obtain such occupations and address the challenges they may endure. The contribution of the results credits the research questions and the conclusion of the data captured from the participants. NVivo 12 included the concept of mapping and analyzing data (QSR International, 2018). During the coding process of creating categories, I made themes based on the data obtained during the interviews with 15 African American women. Evaluating the findings of this doctoral research study on African American women in senior executive positions, the results will provide insight into how African American women relate to business and how this study may assist them in reaching a high executive-level place. The presentation of the findings reflected the research questions and the conclusion of the data retrieved from the participants. See Appendix for the interview questions.

The raw data produced in this doctoral research study relates to standpoint theory because African American women who seek to excel in their careers strive to enhance their jobs and the organizations in which they work. When barriers are present, the restrictions may prevent African American women from excelling in their careers. This

disparity could prohibit businesses from growing because of the lack of diversity in the workplace.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In phenomenological research, several threats to validity will raise questions about a researcher's ability to conclude that the interventions affect an outcome and not some other factor. There are two types of threats to validity: internal threats and external (Creswell, 2007). Internal validity threats are experimental procedures, treatments, or experiences of the participants that threaten the researcher's ability to draw correct inferences from the data about the population in an experiment. External validity threats arise when the experimenters draw incorrect references from the sample data to other persons, settings, and past or future situations. Additional risks are the threats to statistical conclusion validity that may arise when experimenters draw inaccurate references from the data because of low statistical power or the violation of statistical assumptions. Threats to construct validity occur when investigators use inadequate definitions and measures of variables.

When conducting a qualitative study, a number of verification procedures can investigate. There are eight primary strategies recommended: triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, negative or discrepant case analysis, external audits, a thick description, bias clarification, and prolonged engagement (see Table 1). I used member checking and researcher bias clarification for the verification procedures for this research study.

Table 1*Verification Strategies*

| Strategy | Definition |
|--|---|
| Triangulation | Examining evidence from resources and using them to build a coherent justification for themes. If themes are established based on converging several data sources or perspectives from participants, this process can add to the study's validity. |
| Member Checking | Use member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings by taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determine whether these participants feel that they are accurate. This does not mean taking back the raw transcripts to check for accuracy. Instead, the researcher takes back parts of the polished product, such as themes, the case analysis, the grounded theory, the cultural description, and so forth. This procedure can involve conducting a follow-up interview with participants in the study and providing an opportunity for them to comment on the findings. |
| Peer Debriefing | This process involves locating (a peer debriefer) who reviews and asks questions about the qualitative study so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher and invest in another person—adding validity to an account. |
| Negative/Discrepant Analysis (information) | Because real life composes of different perspectives that do not always coalesce, discussing contrary information adds to an account's credibility. A researcher can accomplish this by examining evidence about a theme. Most evidence will build a case for the theme; researchers can also present information that contradicts the general perspective of the theme. By presenting this contradictory evidence, the account becomes more realistic and valid. |
| External Audits | As distinct from a peer briefer, the auditor is not familiar with the researcher or the project and can provide an objective assessment of the project throughout the research process or after the study....The procedure of having an independent investigator look over many aspects of the project(e.g. accuracy of transcription, the relationship between the research questions and the data, the level of data analysis from the raw data through interpretation) enhances the overall validity of a qualitative study |
| Researcher Bias Clarification | This self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers. Reflectivity is mentioned as a core characteristic of qualitative research. Good qualitative research contains comments by the researchers about how their interpretation of the findings shapes their background, such as their gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin. |
| Thick Description | This description may transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences. Qualitative researchers provide detailed descriptions of the setting, for example, or provide many perspectives about a theme to become more realistic and richer. This procedure can add to the validity of the findings. |
| Prolonged Engagement (Time) | The researcher develops an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study and can convey details about the site and the people, which lends credibility to the narrative account. The more experience that research has with participants in their actual settings, the more accurate or valid the findings will be. |

Ethical Issues

Most researchers involved in qualitative research projects concentrate on the significance of ethical concerns such as (a) informed and voluntary consent, (b) confidentiality of information shared, (c) anonymity of research participants, (d) beneficence or no harm to participants, and (e) reciprocity (Creswell, 2007). Researchers should allow participants access to their data including field notes, journals, and interview transcripts (Janesick, 2001). Once the study was completed, a one-page summary was written to reflect the participants' survey findings and the community. This one page informed the participants and community of African American women's lived/recent experiences in senior executive positions. The objective of the population within the project was to highlight the minimal number of African American women in senior-level situations and how mentorship might enhance promotions.

I also explained to the participants the interview process and expressed appreciation for sharing their experiences. Participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time, and there was no obligation to participate in the research. Any information the participant provided was confidential. I did not use the participants' personal information for any purposes beyond this research assignment or include anything that could identify the study reports' participants. A signed confidentiality agreement by anyone viewing the data (outside the researcher or academic staff) is on file. The data obtained during the interviews are in a locked safe and will be destroyed within 5 years to protect participants' rights and confidentiality.

Summary

Chapter 3 described the research design and rationale for the study, my role in the data collection process, the population setting and size population, and the methodology, data collection, recording tools, analysis, and validity of the project. I also explained the justifications for utilizing a qualitative study approach and addressed threats to study validity and ethical issues. I interviewed 15 African American women in northern California to collect the study data. Chapter 4 includes the study findings based on the analysis of the data.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to discover the experiences of African American women and the lack of diversity and equal opportunities in the workplace that prohibits them from advancing to executive positions in their careers. Fifteen interviews with African American women in northern California who held a senior executive position may provide insight on how African American women can prepare for obtaining a senior executive level position. The research questions addressed perspectives on the glass ceiling phenomenon, barriers that prevent promotion to upper management, why some women are able to overcome obstacles, and gender and diversity leadership policies and programs in northern California that may address these obstacles.

This chapter contains the interview results from 15 participants. Participants' demographics illustrate the population. Also included are data collection procedures and techniques used to analyze the data. This information follows an assessment of the evidence for trustworthiness. This chapter concludes with a summary of the research findings.

Demographics

Centered on the underrepresentation of African American women in senior executive positions, a limited number of African American women exist in these positions (mainly in nonprofit organizations in northern California). Fifteen African American women participated in this phenomenological study. To assess the sample better and allow for a more detailed analysis of the qualitative data, I collected sets of demographic information from each participant at the beginning of their interview. The

data demographics included age, position title, years in current position, and the highest level of education (see Table 2). For anonymity, I coded participants as P1 through P15.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

| Participant Code | Age | Education Level | Position Title | Years in Position |
|------------------|-----|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| P1 | 41 | MBA | Client Service Specialist | 3 |
| P2 | 47 | MA/PhD (pending) | Career Coach/Program Manager | 7 |
| P3 | 59 | Some college | Peer Support Specialist | 16 |
| P4 | 53 | Certification | CEO, Facilitator | 12 |
| P5 | 54 | Bachelors | Billing Analyst | 20 |
| P6 | 58 | Masters | Principal Consultant | 15 |
| P7 | 58 | Bachelors | Transformation Network Partner | 12 |
| P8 | 55 | Bachelors | Dental Program Manager | 10 |
| P9 | 41 | Some college | State Worker (EEO) | 6 |
| P10 | 31 | Bachelors | Sr Aviation Operations Sergeant | 2 |
| P11 | 54 | Bachelors | State Worker (OCIO)/Data Manager | 5 |
| P12 | 38 | Associates | Certified Nurses' Assistant | 8 |
| P13 | 56 | Some college | Executive Office Professional | 11 |
| P14 | 58 | High School Graduate | Regulatory Affairs Assistant | 16 |
| P15 | 35 | Associate of Arts | City Worker/Federal Government | 9 |

The range of age groups indicated generational diversity within participants.

Although most of the participants were in the 41–50 age group, participants between the ages of 31–40 were 40% of the participant population, suggesting that participating organizations welcome the younger generation in executive leadership. All participants verified the years of schooling completed in graded public, private, or parochial schools and colleges, universities, or professional schools. Seventy-nine percent of the participants hold master's degrees. The high numbers are indicative of the standard criteria for executive leadership positions and expectations for women (see Smith, 2012). Information revealed that 85% of participants were in upper-level or management positions. There was a varied depiction of ages, experience, and status titles within the

position of each participant. Fifty-five percent of participants have been in their existing positions for a minimum of 3 years or longer.

Data Collection

The interviews included 23 semistructured questions that were audio tape-recorded and transcribed. See Appendix for the interview questions. Semistructured interviews are effective when a researcher has the opportunity to interview participants (Bernard, 2012). The pre-established questions had guidelines that enhanced the communication during the interview. The answers to questions were the opinions of the participants based on their lived experiences.

Fifteen African American women participated in interviews based on convenience and availability. The interviews were audio tape-recorded and transcribed. Semistructured interviews followed a script but remained open-ended for the participants to answer the questions freely (Bernard, 2012). During the interview, I used a device called Otter.ai to ensure the transcription was accurate.

Data Analysis

I used NVivo 12 software to analyze the data. NVivo 12 included the concept of mapping and analyzing data (QSR International, 2018). During the coding process of creating categories, I made themes based on the data obtained during the interview with 15 African American women. The results provided insight into how African American women related to business and how this study may help them reach senior executive-level positions. The findings reflected the research questions and the conclusion of the data retrieved from the participants.

The raw data produced in this doctoral research study is related to the systems theory because African American women who seek to excel in their careers strive to enhance their careers and the organizations in which they work. When barriers are present, they may prevent African American women from excelling in their careers. This disparity could prohibit businesses from growing because of the lack of diversity in the workplace.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To ensure that the data collected was trustworthy, I reviewed and made minor edits to the completed transcripts after receiving them from Zoom and Otter.ai. The minor modifications included deleting conversation fillers. I also transcribed words that were difficult to understand. Once I completed the review of the transcripts, I initiated the member checking process. I sent each participant their transcript and requested that they review it, make any necessary changes, or approve it. I also informed them that if the transcript did not reflect their thoughts, I would contact them to discuss the discrepancies.

Transferability

To accomplish transferability, I utilized a thick description of the data to enhance its validity. I also offered a comprehensive narrative of the methodology applied to collect the data. Being transparent regarding the context and the people recruited for the study is also a form of transferability (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Having a variety of participants was a part of the comprehensive collection of the contributors. The

participant section came from several organizations and represented a diverse measure of positions.

Furthermore, transferability suggested how the findings could be applied in another study. Though this study concentrated on leadership positions within nonprofit organizations, the research methodology and design can be utilized in profitmaking businesses. The findings described could also be achieved in a study conducted within a for-profit setting.

Dependability

Dependability requires the study's consistency (O'Sullivan et al., 2016). I described the data analysis process and how it endorsed the descriptive case study design. The information offered was obtained from several sources, including questionnaires and participants' responses to the interview questions. The answers represented the participants' perspectives. For the duration of the interview meetings, I raised additional follow-up inquiries for explanation and extension of the participants' responses. I took notes to document better information. As I ended the interview meetings, I repeated communications to confirm the participants' answers were in the perspective they wanted to deliver, adding more perceptions to the glass ceiling phenomenon.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which others can confirm or corroborate the results (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). The triangulation methodology used achieves confirmability; triangulation is a multimethod approach to data collection and data analysis (Hatch, 2002). The data were collected from demographic questionnaires, video

and audio interviews, meeting observation memos, and transcribed interviews. All the sources were used during the data analysis phase and aided in the reliability of the results. The various demographic and data analysis charts and the actual interview results are examples of confirmability (O'Sullivan et al., (2016). The participants could complete the demographic questionnaire and review and edit their interview transcripts to ensure the information was from their perspective.

Study Results

In this research study, I attempted to answer the research questions regarding the barriers impacting women's promotion into senior executive leadership positions for African American women. The interview questions (Appendix B) are on the research literature and the current state of female leadership. Walden University's Institutional Review Board approved the interview questions (IRB#04-05-21-0033368). This section summarizes the results and themes and their relationship to the research questions and supporting quotes from the participants.

Fifteen African American women in executive-level positions participated in a 23-question interview to explore the central question of this research study. The themes were formulated by analyzing the data after completing the coding and cataloging process. For anonymity, I coded the candidates as P1-P15.

Theme 1: Strategies to Success

The participants shared several attributes: the desire to be successful, the tenacity to overcome obstacles, and ensuring they reached a certain level of success (particularly within their careers). Regardless of the barriers, stopping was not an alternative. If the

initial response were negative, participants would attempt to find a resolution to generate a confident answer. P1 said,

Sometimes, the cherry on top is simply figuring our ways through life. I overcome these challenges. Of course, through talking to different people, you're going to hit barriers with people you can't sway otherwise. Still, I try to deliver myself as I am, be as honest as possible, and direct something bothering me; I 'spit it'...professionally. But we have got to let people know what's up. Otherwise, they will run over you and continue to pass you up. So that's that.

P3 responded,

I had my own business. I used to do hair and provide services, like, you know, in the professional arena around here. And so, I've always had my own business. And basically, I was studying to be a drafter, and I was going to get into that and have my own like, kind of like, I wanted to design cars and stuff. So when my arm went out, I couldn't do that work anymore. Do hair. So, I went back to college and was studying to be an engineer, probably AutoCAD, to design cars, the ones that be a car designer, but in the midst of that, I had my first mental health crisis. And I wasn't able to complete that. But then I got into a real bad space in my life. And I ended up having some difficulties dealing with my emotional state. And it lasted for about four years before I realized that I was suffering from major depression, suicidal ideations and an anxiety disorder; I had no idea. But in the long run, after I got treatment, I recovered quite, quite well. It took maybe approximately six years of a lot of work. And that and during that

process, I've learned a lot about mental health and myself, and I ended up deciding to go back to college, which was frightening because I was like, Oh, my God, I messed up there, and I'm going to mess up there again. But I buckled down, and I got a lot of support from my instructors that I was going to school to And decided to go back to college SCSM through a program called supported Ed with people with mental health challenges. Just this just to get them. I say or sit back into college. Some of us have been in college and had to quit because of our mental health challenges. And that was one of those students. So I decided to do it. I stuck it out. It was a rough struggle. But eventually, within two or three weeks, I was like, I think I'm supposed to be here. I buckled down and did a program. They're at the College of San Mateo in one year when no one else has ever done that program there. And I ended up getting a peer certificate for peer support specialists before Dave and he started doing it in this county. And in the state of California period. They've been doing it in Pennsylvania long for a long time. But I was kind of like a little Trailblazer.

Theme 2: Work Ethic and Determination

Participants concurred that to be successful requires hard work and determination. All participants agreed that African American women must work twice as hard as colleagues for any advanced position considerations. Once African American women attained certain levels in their careers, they worked very hard to maintain and plan for any potential matters. P1 replied,

Some of the challenges is regarding race, and I'm in the work world of not being treated fairly. Of course, amongst the top Caucasian candidates ("the entitled"), I would say that the biggest piece is that I think I am being looked over because I am not them. It is never anything I get like, 'Oh, I didn't have the experience or anything like that. It is usually well known or instilled in them that I will never be up there because I am "this." And you know, women of color, I highly suggest that number one, something that I was taught a long time ago. Believe in yourself, and floor it. Nobody can stop you; you can never ask too many questions, and you can never ask dumb questions. There are always ways to move up, even when it takes longer. You just can't give up, so be yourself. Definitely look at education as a piece. I think they helped me a lot. I acquired a lot of experience, but as I stated before, education is the cherry on top. They see that you have the educational piece behind that allows for other things that would benefit helping minority women.

P3 stated,

On every round, I'm an advocate for myself. And I feel so empowered these days that I can use all the training, all the abilities, all the knowledge, all the information I have got stored in my brain from training after training, workshops, after workshops throughout the years, conferences, all this all these different pieces of the puzzle be put together to create this masterpiece of who I am. And being able to execute and use all these tools and all these skills to bring substance

to their life and sustenance to others' lives. No, no, that that's a big integral piece for me. I am just grateful. I'm so grateful.

Theme 3: Overcoming the Barriers

All participants indicated using specific strategies to overcome the barriers to obtaining their senior-level positions. Participant experiences were as follows. P1 stated, I think one has been the association with the company I was with; I applied for other transportation companies that had a particular look on my last employer, um, in a sense, where they didn't like take their work seriously. So they put me in a byline. I'm like, Oh, yeah, this is your title. But we heard the title he does this. Oh, this is so this is all you do that type of thing—not looking at me. And my expertise, experience, and everything that comes, you know what I mean? I think the other piece is me being a female. Um, oh, wow. It's just, especially in the transportation business; they feel you got to be tough and hard. And of course, this I'm a female, I don't have those, you know, abilities or characteristics. So that's a challenge. And also just being Brown. I am African American. So I'm in the organization that I'm in now. In my building, I am one of two of us. I think I got there and was like, Wow. So um, yeah, those who like at least three to start. We could be here all day. Yeah. I can talk about my short, you know, hi. You know, all that. You know, I love it. You know, the fact that I got kids. Well, hold on, are you know, are they aging? Yes. Many challenges I face. But yeah, those are just probably the top three, though.

P2 responded,

Being a Black woman, but that's the biggest challenge because when I look at the people who advanced next to me or around me, their skills were less than mine. Their abilities were less than mine; even in some instances, their education was less than mine. And the biggest reason that I could see was just being a black woman, there was, you know, any feedback about hey, why was that? Advancement opportunities were not given to me, and feedback was always very vague. And almost like they were trying to, you know, pick from straws, makeup stuff. At the end of the day...we don't want a black lady sitting in that chair. That part right there? Well, that's definitely a challenge. Yeah, and honestly, I did try and navigate that, like, with two ways, and one of them is active right now. So the first way I'm trying to overcome that or navigate that is putting myself out there like, "Hey, I'll volunteer for this project, Hey, I'll lead this initiative. Hey, you know, I'll spend extra time doing whatever is needed," because I'm, I'm literally trying to help them see my skills, help them to see the value that I bring to the organization and help them to see like, gosh, like, yeah, this is externally the optics are what they are. But that's, this is a considerable value to our organization. And I so want to help them overlook those things so that I can advance. The instance is, honestly, how do I overcome the challenges? I leave. And what I'm doing right now is building my own business. So I don't have to come back. You know, you make your opportunity go to another organization. And in that organization, go for the salary that I should have had at the one I left go for the role, I should have had the one I left or at least the responsibilities. And

then, as I said, when you're building your own, you'll have to deal with none of them.

Theme 4: Diversity and Leadership

Participants gave their perspectives on how diversity leadership policies and training would enhance and increase the number of qualified women who would be prepared to excel in senior executive leadership. Participant experiences were as follows. P1 stated,

Laws. ... because organizations "had to" put women in certain places, they were not. It is all still men. I work with a bunch of lawyers. I will say at least 80% or maybe even 70% are our male partners. Where are all the women at? So the women who have fought to get into places they have gotten into, believe me, that extra piece and like, Hey, this is legally required that that's, oh my goodness, otherwise, we still faced that issue. We're trying to get an executive level within the organization. We're going to frickin go up, and I cry. And when we do that, we still make it less than them. So it's just it's Yeah, sorry, HR. It's the organizational factor that contributes to the promotion of minorities working at the executive level... that law, so there we go.

P2 stated,

You know, what I think if there's like a mentorship program, if there's a path to success kind of program, like, where minority women have the opportunity to be developed in the ways that, you know, other women do because like I said, it's a who, you know, game and usually the way people get to know each other, they

go, you know, they go out for drinks and they go out, you know, for whatever, well, in many cases, won't want to hang out with y'all. But we want ... think if the organization has, and not just a diversity program, that's a joke. A lot of times, organizations will put up the diversity programming, like these are our principles. And these are the things we believe , and it goes no further than that, to actually contribute to the promotion of minority women, like I said, mentorship programs, where they're paired with someone in a higher role. And then, like I said, a path to success thing where they're given the opportunity exposure. So maybe you're invited to collaborate on some big initiative to give them a chance to be seen. So that those executives who don't think with biases or whose biases don't direct all of their work can say, Oh, my gosh, look at the work that this person has done. And then they've been given the opportunity for advancement. So mentorship and like a pathway program. It's probably a better way to say that.

Summary

This qualitative case study answered the research questions. Participants offered thorough, straightforward, and sufficient responses to the interview questions. The interviews explored the experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs of senior-level women with regard to career advancement and possible barriers to career advancement. Research Question 1 asked how African American women perceive and describe their lived experience with the glass ceiling phenomenon within nonprofit organizations. Research Question 2 asked whether any barriers prevent African American women from promoting (into upper management positions). Research Question 3 asked why some

African American women can overcome the obstacles or challenges associated with the “glass ceiling” and succeed. Research Question 4 asked how African American women in leadership positions describe gender diversity leadership policies and programs at nonprofit organizations in Northern California.

Data provided by participants in Chapter 4 identified the organizational, personal influences, challenges and barriers that African American women encounter and conquer to progress in their careers (particularly within nonprofit organizations). Participants also offered approaches as to how these barriers are conquered. Participants provided reactions and personal recollections as they defined the glass ceiling phenomenon within nonprofit organizations.

In Chapter 5, I will summarize the key findings of the study results. I will compare the results to the findings identified in the literature described in Chapter 2. I will review the study’s limitations and summarize the practical and theoretical implications. In addition, I will explain the potential impact of positive social change this study could endorse. Finally, I will describe future recommendations for practice and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This qualitative research study's focal tenet was to discover the organizational and personal influences, challenges, and barriers African American women encountered as they progressed in their careers within nonprofit organizations. In-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed to document the main barriers experienced by African American female leaders in northern California. Important discoveries in this study centered on various themes generated from participants' interviews. A total of four themes supported the research questions that guided the study. I developed strategies for success, work ethic and determination, overcoming barriers, diversity, and leadership from responses to the interview questions.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings from this study supported the results of related studies in the literature review, indicating that women continue to face barriers (cite). Some of the workplace culture characteristics that affect the career development of African American women mentioned were work-life conflict, institutional culture and structure, and exclusion from formal networks. Research Question 1 was answered with the development of themes that identified specific societal, organizational, and gender barriers that hinder women's movement into upper management positions. Research Question 2 gave more insight into why the various barriers identified in Research Question 1 are still prevalent in most nonprofit organizations. The techniques and initiatives specified in Research Question 3 can assist women with overcoming the identified barriers. As the number of women in senior executive positions increases, they

will also show that they are qualified to lead and bring unique and diverse experiences to the senior executive ranks. Finally, Research Question 4 addressed the importance of diversity in the workplace and its' importance to an organization. Participants acknowledged that incorporating such programs in their organizations ensures equality, fairness, and opportunities for all, regardless of race or gender.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are weaknesses within a study that the researcher may not identify (Cresswell, 2007). The limitations of this study became evident throughout the credibility and transferability. I used member checking to verify the material transcribed in each transcript was the participants' opinions. I established consent through email from all participants. Due to the type of participants selected in the study, the conclusions may not be similar to other senior-level positions. The senior-level participants represent nonprofit organizations in northern California. The study's findings may be relevant to other nonprofit organizations outside northern California.

Recommendations

I recommend additional research about the workplace characteristics affecting the career development of African American women (mainly) in nonprofit organizations. The research questions concentrated on barriers perceived by the participants, why the barriers exist, and what approaches to address or eliminate the recognized barriers. Equal opportunity is an issue that remains despite the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and diversity programs in organizations. I recommend additional research about the inequality of African American women in senior executive level management

positions and continued research to explore why the percentage is so modest compared to their colleagues. Additional research about mentoring programs in organizations would also be valuable for relating to African American women and their career paths. The mentoring programs may offer African American women further entrance to senior executive-level management positions.

Another recommendation for future research is to expand to other regions within the country. This study was on nonprofit institutions in northern California. Several participants commented how the barriers identified would probably be barriers in other areas in the United States. Emphasizing these areas in nonprofit organizations makes sure that businesses remain to work toward functioning at the maximum degree of integrity to ensure everyone receives equal opportunities to excel.

Implications

In this section, I have provided the possible implications of the study on positive change for individuals, organizations, and society. I have also discussed the theoretical and practical implications of the study. The implications regarding social change are in alignment with the study's findings.

Positive Social Change

The implications for positive social change include improving society, culture, organizations, and how African American women are viewed in their careers. Even though nonprofit organizations are considered the building places for leadership positions, the findings generated from this study discovered they are still working beneath limited historical and societal standards regarding gender positions. More women

are employed in nonprofit organizations, and the number of women in the professional sector has expanded. The discoveries of this research demonstrate that the necessity for change is essential.

The study included 15 African American women to obtain assessments regarding the workplace characteristics and steps to becoming senior executive leaders with nonprofit organizations. Participants advocated for more African American women in leadership functions. The participants stated various methods and initiatives to effectively increase the number of females in senior executive positions. The strategies and initiatives mentioned included establishing peer-supported networks (mentoring) and promoting leadership diversity. Several participants suggested that shifts from time to time should be made because many men are not open to change. Diversity leadership research is essential due to societal pressures, generational differences, and sustainability (Capek et al., 2006). As several participants commented, the barriers African American women confront as they strive to shift into senior executive leadership have taken generations to form; consequently, present organizations should continue dedicating themselves to diversity and eliminating the barriers.

Theoretical Implications

The current research study assisted in progressing the roles of standpoint theory and Black feminist thought, which acted as the framework for this study. The problem of this study was how African American women could overcome the workplace characteristics that affect the career developmental barriers they face as they attempt to advance into senior executive leadership positions. This study gave additional

observational data related to both theory and foundation and their purpose in opening more opportunities for African American women to obtain senior executive leadership positions in nonprofit organizations.

Research practitioners should understand African American women's barriers to occupying senior executive leadership positions. The practitioners should obtain more evidence regarding why these barriers still exist and how these barriers harm African American women's career development. Furthermore, practitioners can discover the techniques utilized to assist African American women in overcoming these barriers within a nonprofit organization. The study added to the body of knowledge by hearing from the participants about how the identified barriers restrain women and an organization's growth.

Practical Implications

The study proposed supportive assessments and approaches to nonprofit organizations to enhance the number of African American women in senior executive leadership positions. The results provide information on various general and organizational barriers that hold African American women from advancing their positions. Though the obstacles are numerous and some historical traditions are deep-rooted in organizational formation, the participants offered pragmatic resolutions to how these barriers could be defeated. This study could expand and augment African American women's leadership prospects in nonprofit, corporate, and governmental organizations.

Conclusions

Workplace characteristics affecting African American women as they make an effort to progress through the ranks to senior executive leadership positions, also known as the glass ceiling phenomenon, were under review in this study. This descriptive case study design aimed to deliver a real-life context of this phenomenon in nonprofit organizations in northern California. The study centered on observed and actual workplace characteristics (i.e., barriers) that African American women encounter and how they can overcome these barriers. Within organizations, obstacles like exclusion, role satisfaction, and overall work environment/engagement remain. Participants in the study who were senior executives at the nonprofit organizations offered objective outlooks about the scarcity of African American women in senior executive leadership. Participants also gave optimistic and practical approaches to how African American women can overcome these barriers.

Leadership is a practical skill encompassed by individuals to guide. The conclusions in this study and other research analyses are transforming the discussions and changing aspects regarding African American females and leadership. The primary result from this research indicated that looking past gender or race and promoting diversity will help remove those biased barriers and push society and organizations closer to actual equality.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Coretta Alexander

Interviewee:

Demographics

Age:

Position Title

Years in Current Position

Highest Level of Education

1. What factors such as education, tenure, and/or job experience affect career advancement within organizations?
2. Since being employed with the organization, are there opportunities for career growth? If so, in what capacity?
3. How long have you been in your current position? What brought you to this organization? What type of work did you do previously?
4. How long have you been in your current field? Why did you select your current occupation?
5. When was your last promotion? How many promotions have you received with this organization? Have you been satisfied with your raises and the frequency?

6. What are some professional barriers or challenges you have faced when trying to advance your career?
7. How did you overcome the challenges?
8. What are some challenges other minority women have experienced and shared with you? What suggestions do you have for other minority women seeking senior-level or executive-level positions?
9. Based on your experience, has the “glass ceiling” concept been shattered, or is it still a barrier to career advancement? How does the glass ceiling affect minority women compared to their counterparts?
10. Do you feel there is equal opportunity for minority women to attain executive-level positions as compared to others within your organization?
11. What organizational factors contribute to the promotion of minority women working at the executive level within an organization?
12. Before being promoted, what experiences and level of interaction did you have with leaders within the organization?
13. How were you able to display your talents and abilities to lead? What is your leadership style? How does it differ from other leaders in executive-level positions? How does the organization define the qualities of an effective leader? Do you think your leadership skills have influenced your opportunities for promotions? How?
14. Are you a member of a peer support network or professional organization? Are support networks encouraged by the organization?

15. Do you think it is more difficult for minority women to attain an executive-level position than men? Why? Is there a difference between women and men obtaining leadership positions?
16. Within your organization, how diverse are people who hold executive-level positions?
17. What personal characteristics do minority women perceive as contributing factors to attaining executive-level positions?
18. What features common to minority women that you feel may hinder or promote the advancement of minority women to executive-level positions?
19. What factors do you feel are most important for minority women who want to demonstrate their readiness for executive-level responsibilities? Why are these factors important?
20. Do you feel that you were promoted because of diversity initiatives? Why or why not? How important is diversity to this organization?
21. Do you feel your organization is a fair place for minority women to advance? Why or why not?
22. What other experiences would you like to share? What steps would you recommend for other minority women seeking career advancement?
23. Would you like to add any comments outside of the scope of the questions that have been asked?